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THE FINE ARTS AND THE CLASSICS

There is, I take it, an inherent appropriateness in allowing some representative of the Classics to speak upon this occasion¹. The interests of no subject now taught in our Universities are more closely allied to the study of the Fine Arts than are those of the Classics. The best traditions, the most powerful ideals of classical studies point to the same goal, the ennobling of life through devotion to the beautiful and to the true. Such a statement may sound strange to those who think of the classical languages as dreary wastes of gerunds and second aorists, but it is none the less correct. The ancient Classics first got their hold upon the imagination of men because of their beauty, a matchless harmony of form and content, and it is for this primarily that their reign has continued and will endure. It was the nobility, directness and fire of his thought and of his verse which won for Homer in the first instance that preeminence over many rivals which he enjoyed among his countrymen—no mere accident of age, or of subject-matter, or of tradition; these same qualities will ever make his a name to conjure with, if life be not destined to become a more somber and commonplace thing.

I am, of course, aware that in the ancient Classics men have looked for, and thought they found, other things. Expiring antiquity clung to the literature of the fathers, which, like the golden chain that held earth pendant from Olympus, was for them the only tie that bound their decadence to an age of culture. The Middle Ages sought all science therein, and were in the main content could they but understand and elucidate Vergil or *il maestro di color che sanno*. The Renaissance and pseudo-classicism saw models for themselves to copy. The nineteenth century found not so much form as inspiration. Yet throughout, in every changing current of practical, or philosophical, or romantic thought, the ancient Classics have held their own by virtue of their typical and universally human content, and by their sheer beauty of form. If the day should ever come that Greek be taught solely for exegetical purposes because of the accident that the New Testament was written in that language, or Latin merely for contributions to the understanding of English syntax and etymology, instruction in these tongues may indeed continue, but the spirit of the

Classics will have irrecoverably fled. And I may add that not the least among several reasons for the apparent decline in classical studies is precisely this, that we are at present passing through an age of industrial and commercial expansion, which, in comparison with many that have preceded it, is singularly insensible to beauty of any kind. It is the object, I take it, of this Association in part to overcome the prevalent aesthetic apathy by establishing serious and thoroughgoing instruction in the fine arts in our Schools and Colleges; hence every earnest Classicist must bid it God speed.

Now classical studies have long since passed the stage where a mere understanding of the languages and a proper appreciation of the literature were considered sufficient. We seek rather the life in its widest sense, the culture, the achievements and the ideals of the Greeks and the Romans, wherever expressed, in belles lettres, in science and philosophy, in political and social institutions, in the useful and the fine arts. It is perhaps the most abiding scientific achievement of classical studies that, towards the end of the eighteenth century, they contributed as much as any other single cause to that great intellectual movement which substituted for the abstracting and universalizing processes of thought the genetic and the historical. Wolf's *Prolegomena to Homer*, Niebuhr's work upon Roman origins, the achievements of a whole galaxy of philologists who saw a hitherto unimagined field of investigation into the anatomy and physiology of language opened up to them by the introduction of Sanskrit for comparison with Greek and Latin, all helped to produce a profound intellectual revolution. Men ceased to regard any given phenomenon as typical, normal, universally true, but began to look upon the world and all it contains, institutions, creeds and politics, as but cross-sections of an ever-changing progression. The *πάρα περ* of Heraclitus is for us the most concise philosophic creed of universal application. So it was out of the vivid realization that no human achievement whatsoever could be understood except when considered genetically, as a living organism in relation to its causes, its effects, the whole complex of social conditions from which it springs and upon which it reacts, that the modern science of classical philology has arisen. Its great protagonist, August Boeckh, amazed and scandalized the older generation of scholars by descending to the discussion of such

¹This paper was read at a meeting of the College Art Association, at Urbana, Illinois.

vulgar themes as the revenues of the Athenian State, the average daily wage of laborers, and the cost of laundering a gentleman's himation. Boeckh persisted and his cause has triumphed. The typical classical philologist of to-day is instructed in the political institutions and history of antiquity, its art, religion and philosophy to a degree that the students of no other similar field of literature approach. It is obviously idle for a man to pretend to understand the Hellenic attitude toward life, and know nothing of Greek vases, or architecture, or sculpture, or the finer arts and crafts. One whole side of that life, perhaps its most characteristic, is a sealed book for him. It is as important to appreciate Phidias and the Parthenon as it is to know of the battle of Marathon or to recognize a dual, and, I may add, it is quite as enjoyable. The classicists have been quick to realize the help to be secured for the understanding of their problems from the scientific study of art and archaeology, and they have encouraged in every way the excavation of ancient sites, the collection from them of all, even the most trifling, objects into museums, and the proper publication in worthy form of the more important discoveries. Though the expenses have been great, they have repaid themselves many fold. Every phase of the study of classical philology has profited from the archaeological discoveries of the past century, while some whole fields of study are almost entirely dependent upon them. Many modern phases of the study of linguistics, history, mythology, religion, and social and economic conditions would be quite inconceivable without their aid.

Allow me to illustrate this point from a field in which I am greatly interested. The Italian government, under the able direction of Signor Orsi, has recently started to excavate the ancient city of Locri in Bruttium. In this case, without even the help of inscriptional evidence the student of the history of art can give us positive and important information of the widest scope and bearing. For example, the two styles of pottery and metallic implements in certain rock-hewn tombs in the hills back of the town prove that the primitive inhabitants of the region represent the same kind and stage of culture as that of the Sicels of Sicily, and thus a suspected passage in Thucydides is cleared up, a previously dismissed legend of the colonization period is shown to have some basis in fact, and a ray of light is cast upon the confused ethnography of the Italic peninsula in primitive times. More than that, the presence of vase fragments that bear geometric, zoomorphic and insular designs, shows that, long before the first Greek settlement upon the spot, it was a trading station for Greek merchants and natives of the interior. What had the natives to offer? Well, diagonally across the mountains of Bruttium, which are at this point easily traversed, were the copper mines of Temesa. Land transport of a few miles saved a dangerous ship voyage of nearly one hundred and fifty. Now, in the *Odyssey* a ship captain is

introduced on his way to Temesa for a cargo of copper. Might not this have attracted the first traders to just that spot? But, because the first permanent Greek colonies in the West were not established until towards the end of the eighth century, Homeric scholars have used this passage, and another one about a Sicel slave, to argue that the final composition of the *Odyssey* is later than the first Olympiad. These very potsherds therefore help to relegate *this* argument at least to the Homeric scrapheap.

Again, the excavation of the first Greek cemetery near the city walls proves, through the absence of proto-Corinthian vases of the first style, that the traditional date of colonization—second decade of the seventh century B. C.—is approximately correct. By the demonstration that many of the proto-Corinthian vases are of a kind of clay which is found in the vicinity of the city, we learn that native artists worked after Corinthian models, while primitive Corinthian influence is otherwise vouched for by the circumstance that all of the silver and copper coins of the early period found at Locri are either Corinthian or imitations of Corinthian types, and by certain crude attempts to syncretize Locrian and Corinthian mythology.

In the closing decades of the sixth century B. C. the Persians made many a disastrous inroad upon the prosperity of Ionia and the Isles, which at that time led the rest of Greece in every form of spiritual and intellectual endeavor. For a short while Polycrates of Samos developed an extraordinary naval force and assembled about him a remarkable coterie of poets, artists and architects. But he fell at last, his court was broken up, and his retainers were scattered far and wide. Nearly the whole body of citizens at Teos and at Phocaea emigrated from their ancient homes. Shortly before the battle of Marathon a large faction of the men of Samos sailed for the West, and, after stopping at Locri, finally settled in the ill-fated Messana on the strait between Sicily and Italy. Where communities moved en masse, individuals, as, for example, Pythagoras of Samos, who settled in the neighboring city of Croton, must have emigrated by hundreds to what was then the golden West. Now the excavations have brought to light at Locris a temple dating from the end of the sixth century, which is the only building of the Ionic order of architecture in either Sicily or Magna Graecia. Again, thousands of fragments of terra cotta votive tablets have been found, of the most refined types of Ionic art ranging from the advanced archaic to the beginnings of the severe style, that is, roughly, through the last decades of the sixth and the first few of the fifth century B. C., precisely the period of Ionic emigration. One peculiarity of the terra cotta finds is to be seen in the large number of female figures which from the waist down are of columnar or tubular form. These have been found nowhere else, but are exact reproductions of the singular tubiform marble statue of the archaic period from Samos, commonly called the Samian Hera. The capstone

of the argument is the discovery made by Dörpfeld that in the peculiar dimensions of the Ionic temple just mentioned, where the proportions are perfect but the unit of linear dimension one hitherto unknown, we have clearly the Samian cubit employed, whose length, .525m., is the only common divisor of all the structural dimensions. The conclusions are of course obvious: Samian artists settling at Locri towards the end of the sixth century made considerable contributions to the expression of the artistic life of that community.

It would be needlessly wearisome to specify in detail how the terra cotta tablets throw light on the religious significance of the myth of the rapture and return of Persephone, on the soul cult, and the related Orphic religion, on the significance of the procession of the wicker basket in the Eleusinian mysteries, the origin and meaning of the Bacchic paean and the dithyramb, and many another historical and cultural problem; but the examples chosen prove the point I wished to make. Every one of these discoveries, and countless others like them, has been made possible only by the strenuous scientific study of the fine arts in Greece, in their local and historical variations—not by dilettante rhapsodizings over the antique like those heard in the Renaissance and the pseudo-classical period, when men could not tell a shoddy Roman copy of the second century of our era from a Greek original of the fifth century before Christ, and were constantly imposed upon by wretched modern frauds and even more atrocious restorations.

A serious critical study of art history is the only sort that can help or interest the classicist. Few subjects are so liable to sciolistic treatment and so insufferable when thus treated. The solemn announcement of the obvious which is so often to be heard, for example, 'This figure has lost its legs from the knees down', or 'the cloak is draped over a support', or 'the weight rests on the right leg and the left elbow,' or 'the goddess holds a spear and wears a helmet', etc., etc., is of course useless and stultifying; but even such wooden pronouncements are preferable to sentimental attitudinizing over some graceful neck, or sensuous lips, or charming *naïveté*, or any other of those banal phrases which disgust those whom William James used to call the "tough-minded". Let the student know what he sees, and what it means, its genetic relations backwards and forwards in the history of art and of culture, and then leave it to him to discover the beauty for himself. If he can, it will be his permanent possession; if he cannot, any expenditure of time and eloquence is useless. Let the work done be serious, concentrated, exacting, let it aim at developing powers of criticism and discrimination, and an independent judgment, and finally, in the gifted few, foster the talent for creative work.

And now let us consider for a moment the whole matter from a more detached and general point of view. Let us assume, for the sake of the argument,

that the acquisition of liberal culture is a worthy life-aim, and that proper provision should be made for it in our Colleges of Arts and Sciences. I for one cannot see why our systems of education have done so much for the gratification of our intellectual curiosity, and so little for the satisfaction of our aesthetic interests. The end of the state, said Aristotle, is not merely *life* but a *nobility in life*, and the same may be said of education. Abstractly considered, the beautiful is as worthy an object of consideration as the true. It certainly has greater value for the ennobling of life. The good and the beautiful appealed most forcibly to the greatest of the Greek philosophers. It is a significant tribute to the effect upon them of their own national life and ideals that the search for abstract and urfaesthetic truth bulked so small in their speculations. Our Western civilization has thrown perhaps undue influence upon the true. Without attempting to reverse an age-long prejudice, we are surely justified in claiming for the beautiful, if not absolute equality with the good and the true, at all events, an honorable place beside them among our educational ideals.

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THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS AFTER CAESAR'S DEATH

In view of the peculiar arrangement of the chronology of events after Caesar's death made by certain modern authorities, such as Gardthausen, Schiller and Ferrero, it has seemed advantageous to make a brief study of the sources for the first two days.

When their task was completed and Caesar lay dead, the conspirators turned to address the Senate, to inform its members that, with the tyrant¹, the tyranny was destroyed and the republic established. They intended to have Caesar's estate confiscated and his acts rescinded². They doubtless also expected to be surrounded by a joyful body of senators and to be acclaimed as Liberators. But the Senate was looking out for its own safety. All around had fled amidst the utmost confusion, senators and Caesarians alike³. However, the conspirators did not lose confidence in the Senate. The flight of the Senate, they thought, was merely from ignorance and alarm; its members were their own friends and relatives and would eventually, they felt sure, rally to their support⁴.

It became necessary then to appeal to the people. Daggers in hand, the assassins rushed into the Forum, shouting that they had slain a king and a tyrant. One bore upon a spear a freedman's cap, a symbol of liberty⁵. But in the Forum they found worse confusion. The people were pouring forth from the theater and running in all directions, amid a terrific clamor⁶. The market was plundered and in the excitement some even were killed⁷. Brutus addressed those who were in the Forum and succeeded in quieting

¹Appian, B.C. 2.119.

²Suetonius, Caesar 82.

³Ap-

pian, 2.118; Nicolaus, Vita Caesaris 25.

⁴Appian, 2. 119.

⁵Appian. 2.119.

⁶Nicolaus, 25.

⁷Appian, 2.118.